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SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATION LAGS IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

REF: A) KHARTOUM 1281 B) KHARTOUM 1165 C) KHARTOUM 1262

¶1. (SBU) Voter registration in Southern Sudan continues to move slowly and to be hampered by organizational, funding and logistical challenges. Percentages of registered voters in the south lag far behind the overall totals of registered voters in other parts of Sudan. Lack of clear policies, guidance, and resources prevails at all levels, but primarily between the National Election Commission (NEC) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and State Election High Committees (SEHCs). The GOSS and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) have voiced concerns over the process and the need for an extended additional time for registration period in Juba, at the National Elections Committee (NEC) Policy Committee meeting, and at the South Sudan Opposition Conference in Khartoum. End Summary.

LOW TURNOUT PLAGUES SOUTHERN SUDAN

¶2. (SBU) Low voter registration turnout plagues Southern Sudan. According to NEC registration statistics from November 17, less than seventeen percent of eligible voters in Southern Sudan have registered, compared with thirty-four percent in the North. International observers from the Carter Center and UNMIS report seeing no more than five voters at a station in a given day in some areas. On November 17, UNMIS reported that there has been a significant increase in the number of registrations since November 11, which began the GOSS's week-long registration drive. Jerome Leyraud, International Federation of Election Supervisors (IFES) Country Director attributes low voter turn-out to a lack of information about the election process and voter registration in the South as well as a lack of "motivational messaging" from the government and political parties. Mobile registration sites have also made it difficult for State High Committees to pinpoint registration sites in advance, thereby complicating the task of providing up-to-date schedules to the public.

OBSTACLES HINDERING REGISTRATION IN THE SOUTH

¶3. (SBU) There are a number of reasons for low voter turn-out in the South. First, many of the registration centers opened late due to logistical challenges and delays in training registration staff. This was particularly acute in the South. Ray Kennedy, UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer, told poloff that logistics also hindered election preparation, and some registration centers opened late, particularly in Western Equatoria. Deputy Secretary General for the SPLM Anne Itto explained other causes for the current low voter turn-out. Itto was specifically concerned about logistics, funding and communications restraints. USAID funded the voter registration materials, and UNMIS was to have transported material to the states. While UNMIS provided some support in getting registration materials out to state capitals, some states have had difficulties

distributing materials internally due to the lack of logists and funding. Itto said that she was informed on November 17 that both Yei and Wau were running out of registration materials and there were problems in getting more to them. Itto said that three of the six registration centers in Yei had closed due to these shortages. Itto told poloff that the State Election High Committees (SEHC) have only received twenty percent of the funding promised to them from the NEC. In recent meetings in Rumbek and Malakal, state governors and other officials were troubled by the failure of the SEHCs to engage and coordinate with local governments in facilitating registration.

GOSS CONCERNS FALL ON DEAF EARS IN THE NORTH

¶14. (SBU) During a NEC Policy Committee Meeting on November 12, officials from the GOSS Ministry of Regional Cooperation raised concerns about voter registration in the South with the NEC Deputy Chairman, Professor Abdulla Abdulla. The Southerners stated: "Voter registration has been very poorly done in the South. Information been inadequately distributed and there is an urgent need for an information campaign". The officials noted concern about the lack of responsibility and funding for the Southern Sudan High Election Committee (SSEHC), and pleaded with the NEC to facilitate the SSEHC to act as coordinator in the South. Abdulla objected and reiterated that the NEC does not see an SSEHC role in registration and therefore would not fund it. (Note: The Electoral Law does not provide a clear mandate for the SSEHC vis-a-vis the SEHCs. The NEC provides direct guidance to the SEHCs. End note.) Abdulla dismissed GOSS concerns about political space issues and countered, "We need

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to be clear what are facts and what are rumors."

GOSS ASKS FOR REGISTRATION EXTENSION

¶15. (SBU) According to Minister Oyai Deng Ajak, GOSS Minister of Regional Cooperation, Southern President Salva Kiir met Abel Alier, Chairman of the NEC, on November 13 to discuss GOSS "unhappiness" with the election process to date, including instances of "malpractice." According to Oyai, Alier agreed to be more consultative and to work with GOSS and the SSEHC as opposed to directly with the SEHCs. Oyai claimed that Kiir requested a one month extension in the registration process, which Alier said the NEC would consider.

SOUTHERN OPPOSITION BLAMES SPLM FOR INSECURITY

¶16. (SBU) Southern opposition parties and the National Congress Party held a "Southern Sudan Political Parties: South-South Dialogue" conference in Khartoum from November 14 through November 16. (This conference was dominated by anti-SPLM rhetoric, and it is widely accepted that the NCP funded the event.) Parties with significant constituencies in the South, including the United Democratic Party (UDP), United Sudan African Party (USAP), Sudanese People's Liberation Movement- Democratic Change (SPLM-DC), the Southern Sudan Democratic Front (SSDF) and Sudan African National Union (SANU) participated. All parties commented on a lack of education about voter registration and on requisite low voter turnout. The Southern parties blamed the GOSS for its inability to maintain security. Lam Akol, Chairman of the SPLM-DC, stated, "Security has almost broken down as inter- and intra-tribal fights engulf most of the States of Southern Sudan, from Warrap, through Jonglei to Upper Nile...." (ref c). The Southern Political Parties collectively expressed their general dissatisfaction with the election process.

¶17. (SBU) COMMENT: Despite Abel Alier's offer to consider extension of the registration period in Southern Sudan, the NEC remains predominantly focused on elections in the North. Election experts

stated than an extension of the registration period alone will not solve the problem. Additional education campaigns, assistance to SEHCs, and logistics planning will be necessary to ramp up the turn-out in the South.

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